

DISCLAIMER: PATK PAPERS

The *Transactions of the Philadelphia Area Token Kai* were created by the members of that club as exercises in the study of Japanese swords and fittings, usually in preparation for or as a consequence of a club meeting devoted to a specific topic. These are labors of love that make no claim to represent the most authoritative position, or the most current information on any of these topics. These papers are instead presented as models for study following logic that adopting an active approach to research and appreciation is more instructive than just visiting collections, building a library, reading, listening to others and taking notes. We hope that those who undertake similar tasks as a mode of study will find them as rewarding as did we.

James L. McElhinney
Vice President, New York Metropolitan Japanese Sword Club
Former President, Philadelphia Area Token Kai
April 10, 2012

<http://www.ny-tokenkai.org>
nytokenkai@gmail.com

STUDY OF MINO-DEN

Transactions of the Philadelphia Area Token Kai
(Nihon Token Hozon Kai)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Historical Background

Sugata

Jitetsu

Hamon

Shizu

Kanemoto, Kanenobu

Kanesada

Kanemoto

Kanefusa

Ujifusa

Echizen No Kuni Shimosaka Group

Kaga No Kuni Kanewaka Group

Kaga No Kuni Katsukuni Group

Nakago

Bibliography

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Mino province was located just east of Lake Biwa and the "Home Province" on the Tosando (Eastern Mountain Circuit). The earliest smiths of repute to operate in Mino were Junryo (Toshinaga) and Tofusi. The kaji they each established served the rising warrior class that was growing in the provinces outside the Heian court's immediate control. The demand for arms rose sharply during the struggles between the Minamoto (Genji) and Taira (Heike) clans.¹ The establishment of the Minamoto Shogunate in 1185 and the building of the new military capital in Kamakura assured the control of the new military elite. The kaji in Mino continued to produce arms for the new samurai class, but the establishment of the unique traditions of the Mino-den resulted directly from the revolution in Nippon-to accomplished in Kamakura.

The increased demand for arms by the shogunate was most acutely felt in the capital at Kamakura. The assemblage there of leading smiths from all over Japan resulted in a cross-fertilization of techniques and a rich environment for learning and experimentation. The shock of the two Mongol invasions of 1274 and 1281 provided the final impetus to modify and perfect the Nippon-to. Goro Nyudo Masamune is credited with perfecting the sword and is generally considered the greatest smith of all times. His techniques, as embodied in the traditions of the Soshu-den, were widely disseminated by his pupils who came from all parts of Japan to study with him.

One of his "jutetsu" (ten brilliant pupils) was Kaneuji, originally from Yamato. Following his studies with Masamune, Kaneuji migrated to Mino and established his kaji. The traditions of his training in both Yamato-den and Soshu-den were metamorphosed into the establishment of a true Mino-den. Kaneshige, originally from Mino, was also one of the "jutetsu." He returned to Mino and contributed to the development of the Mino-den, but he never enjoyed the same level of esteem as Kaneuji.

By the middle of the Fifteenth Century, most swordmaking activity in Mino was centered in the city of Seki. The direct descendents of Kaneuji and the Naoe-Shizu traditions predominated. The names of Kanesada and Kanemoto emerged as leaders in sword making.

Kanesada was a master craftsman and a driving influence in the continuing development of the Mino traditions. His family name lasted for many generations. His son, considered to be his equal, became known as "No sada" because he wrote the "Kane" character to be read as "No." The third generation Kanesada became known as "Hikusada" for a like reason. Kanemoto was a student of both shodai Kanesada and Kanemune. The Kanemoto name

¹Hogen War (1156); Heiji War (1159-60); Gempei War (1180-85).

also lasted for many generations. Nidai Kanemoto is popularly known as Seki Magoroku. Both of the first two Kanemoto are considered to have made especially sharp swords (O saiyo wazamono), but Magoroku Kanemoto is considered by many to have made the single best cutting swords. The "three cedar" hamon (sanbon sugi ha) was first developed by the Kanemoto smiths.

The Mino tradition of sword making was perhaps the most influential of the Go ka den during the advent of the Shinto period. Following the consolidation of Tokugawa power (1600) and the establishment of the shogunate (1603), there was a great reshuffling of feudal domains. The daimyo capitals, rather than the traditional centers of the Go ka den, became the focus of sword making. The cross-fertilization of traditional techniques which occurred with the resettlement of smiths in provincial capitals caused a re-examination of methods and an abandonment of some of the mass production techniques of the late Koto, Sengoku jidai. Hosokawa Kunihiro, trained in the traditions of Mino, was one of the most influential forces in the study of and return to traditional techniques. The broad tutelage of the Hosokawa kaji, the wide resettlement of Mino smiths and the relative ease of the making of Mino kitae, as compared with the more complex kitae of the other schools of the Go ka den, resulted in the strong Mino influence and character found in the Shinto mainstream.